

**For Immediate Release**

**March 9, 2004**

**Mayor Bob Corker announces nine point plan for reducing chronic homelessness**

***Steering Committee's [Homeless Blueprint](#) Focuses on Access to affordable, permanent Housing and Support Services as Key to Bid to End Chronic Homelessness in Next Decade***

Chattanooga, TN— At a City Hall media conference, Mayor Bob Corker unveiled the findings and recommendations of a seven month effort to develop a Blueprint to dramatically reduce chronic homelessness in Chattanooga in the next ten years. The Executive Director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, Phillip F. Mangano, joined Mayor Corker and members of the fourteen member Blueprint Steering Committee in releasing the seventy-three page report.

The Blueprint calls for improved coordination and better prioritization of the current \$7.3 million spent annually on the homeless services in the region. **It does not call for new City or County funding.**

Mayor Corker thanked the members of the Steering Committee for their hard work in putting together the comprehensive blueprint. He said, "Like so many efforts in our community, when our citizens come together around a shared vision, great things happen. This plan details the extent of the homelessness problem in our community and a specific plan of attack for addressing those problems. By better coordinating the efforts and resources already at work, we can do more to provide housing and services that will allow chronically homeless people and families to be productive citizens again."

The Blueprint details information about the 4,000 individuals who experience homelessness in the Chattanooga area in any given year, approximately 670 of whom are chronically homeless. (It also outlines nine detailed recommendations designed to reduce the number of people who become homeless, increase the number of homeless people placed into permanent housing, decrease the length and disruption of homeless episodes and provide community-based services and supports that prevent homelessness before it happens and diminish opportunities for homelessness to recur.)

"Today, the Chattanooga Region partners with cities all across our country are moving forward with a ten year plan to end the chronic homelessness of people on our streets and in shelters. Mayor Corker enters a partnership that extends literally from the White House to our nation's streets moving through federal agencies, state houses, city halls, the nonprofit and private sectors to homeless

people themselves. It's a good day for all the citizens of the Chattanooga Region," said Philip Mangano, Executive Director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, the federal agency responsible for coordinating the nation's response to reduce and end homelessness. "The Chattanooga Region joins Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, and many other cities in moving beyond the status quo of an ad hoc response to enable homelessness to the common sense of a strategic plan to end homelessness."

Chattanooga's leadership on reducing homelessness has been recognized by the federal government over the last six months. Shortly after launching the Blueprint process, Chattanooga became one of just thirteen cities nationwide to receive a \$2.6 million grant in federal funds for projects designed to end chronic homelessness. In addition, Chattanooga also saw a 75% increase in federal funding under the Continuum of Care program.

"By developing a clear plan for reducing homelessness and better coordinating our existing resources, we have already been able to attract a tremendous amount of new funding," said Mayor Corker.

The Blueprint's Nine Point Plan to Reduce Homelessness focuses on expanding permanent housing opportunities, increasing access to services, preventing homelessness and improving coordination through a Regional Interagency Council on Homelessness. Specific recommendations include:

- Creating 1400 affordable housing units for homeless people by 2014, through the provision of rent subsidies, new housing development and the preservation of affordable housing stock.
- Facilitating housing placements by (a) establishing a centralized housing placement assistance office at Chattanooga Housing Authority and (b) developing a local program to provide a time-limited rental subsidy of four months to two years to homeless people who are employable or receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- Refocusing case management to place and maintain homeless people in permanent housing. Enhanced case management - with lower caseloads - should be a priority for funding.
- Improving the effectiveness of outreach and engagement of homeless people living in public spaces, by coordinating and reviewing all street outreach activities; improving shelters' capacities to assess and place homeless people with a wide range of issues; and working with the State to expedite access to entitlements and other supports
- Linking homeless and formerly homeless people to mainstream services and resources for job training, substance abuse treatment and counseling and mental health services.
- Using enhanced data collection to establish a system for identifying people at risk of homelessness.

- Helping at-risk households remain stably housed by providing emergency assistance, improving access to supportive services and maximizing their incomes.
- Preventing people from becoming homeless when they leave institutional care by developing permanent housing plans prior to release, assigning clear responsibility for their implementation in the community.
- Establishing the *Chattanooga Regional Interagency Council on Homelessness* to enhance government and nonprofit capacity to raise federal and private funds and attract additional resources; expand capacity for data collection and analysis; determine funding priorities for homelessness reduction and approve spending; develop and maintain standards for service delivery and case management; and increase collaboration between for-profit, governmental, nonprofit and faith-based agencies.

The eight member Regional Interagency Council would include representatives of City, County and State government, the federal Interagency Council on Homelessness, the Southeast Tennessee Development District, the United Way, faith based organizations and a current or formerly homeless individual.

Highlights of the The Blueprint's findings include:

- Over the course of a year, more than 4,000 discrete individuals experienced homelessness in the Chattanooga region, including almost 1,000 children.
- On any given night, approximately 758 homeless individuals reside in shelters, transitional housing programs and public spaces in Chattanooga.
  - Gender: The Chattanooga region's homeless population is split fairly evenly by gender, with men slightly outnumbering women.
  - Race: The Chattanooga region's homeless population is 48% white, 50% African-American and 2% Latino.
  - Age: Most homeless people in the Chattanooga region (61%) are between the ages of 30 and 54 years old; 3% of the homeless population is 60 years old or older and 24% consists of children 18 years of age or younger.
  - Mental Health: Approximately 34% of homeless people served by the Homeless Health Care Center report having been "treated for nerves," indicating a serious and persistent mental illness. Approximately 29% of homeless people known to Service Point

self-report having mental illness. Providers estimate that the percentage of unaccompanied homeless single adults with serious mental illness is higher, in the 40-45% range. Very few adult members of homeless families have mental illness.

- Substance Abuse: Approximately one-third of homeless people known to Service Point self-reported having abused drugs or alcohol. Providers estimate that the incidence of substance abuse is closer to 50% among unaccompanied homeless single adults, and less than 15% among adult members of families. Providers estimate that about half of the homeless mentally ill population also has a secondary diagnosis of drug or alcohol addiction.
- Employment: Providers estimate that 5-10% of the unaccompanied homeless single adult population is employed.
- Veterans: Approximately 15-25% of homeless single adults are veterans of the armed forces.
- Domestic Violence: As much as 40% of the homeless family population has experienced recent domestic violence. Many more have histories of domestic violence victimization.
- Our Own: Providers estimate that approximately 80% of all homeless people in Chattanooga grew up or have family ties in Hamilton County.
- Cost: Current spending on homelessness tops \$7.3 million annually, but only 13.6% is directed to permanent housing and supportive services. Almost half (45.6%) goes toward emergency shelter and transitional housing. State, county and city health, mental health and law enforcement agencies also bear significant costs related to homelessness. Philanthropic and faith based organizations account for 43% of current direct spending on homeless services.

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### **Blueprint Steering Committee Membership**

Judi Byrd, Hamilton County Social Services

Phyllis Casavant, Southeast Tennessee Development District

Eva Dillard, United Way of Greater Chattanooga

David Eichenthal, City of Chattanooga

Ron Fender, Community Kitchen

John Hayes, Chattanooga Housing Authority

Anne Henniss, Chattanooga Housing Authority

Linda Katzman, Homeless Healthcare

Gerald Konohia, Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise

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